

THE FOURTEENTH DAY.

13th March, 1924.

The Assembly met at 11-30 A. M., on Thursday, the 13th March, 1924.

Rao Bahadur R. Viraraghava Aiyangar B. A. & B. L., Officer in charge of the Administration, presided.

174. Administrative Reforms.

Mr. V. Ramakrishna Panikkar (Member, Kartikapalli taluk) took a brief survey of the origin and growth of popular institutions in the State and said that they bore ample testimony to the far-sighted statesmanship of His Highness the Maha Raja. He stated that the high level of education and the awakening of political consciousness in the popular mind, due to a variety of healthy influences, had combined to intensify the desire on the part of the people for a larger and more effective share in the administration of the country. The Member was of opinion that the people deserved to be entrusted with greater privileges and responsibilities than what they now enjoyed. He next proceeded to suggest the introduction of certain reforms, of which the institution of an Executive Council with the Dewan as its President claimed his first attention. In order to assist the Dewan, who, being in most cases an outsider without knowledge of local conditions, and to secure continuity of policy in the administration, such an institution would, in the opinion of the Member, prove useful. He next dealt with the personnel and the powers of the Executive Council he had in view. One who commanded the confidence of the Legislative Council alone, he said, should be appointed as the Dewan, and he should be given the power of nominating the members of his Executive Council. In view of the 3 years' experience and training gained in working the new Legislative Council, and in view of the fact that the sister States of Hyderabad and Mysore were already having their own Executive Councils, the Member thought that the creation of an Executive Council in the country was a measure of constitutional reform long overdue.

The next point referred to by the Member was the reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly which, he said, should be converted into a deliberative body from an assembly of petition-mongers, which alone it was at present. The Assembly should be constituted on a statutory basis so as to preclude the possibility of its importance being lessened at the whim and caprice of the Head of the Administration. Incidentally, the Member emphasised the necessity of the Dewan presiding over the deliberations of the Assembly and protested against the practice of a substitute being nominated to discharge that function. The Member next suggested the following changes being introduced in the Assembly Rules :—

- (1) All vakils of civil courts, barristers, graduates and ex-members of the Assembly should be given the power to vote.
- (2) The tax qualification should be reduced to Rs. 25.
- (3) Subjects of His Highness the Maha Raja alone should be eligible for being voters.
- (4) The practice of nominating members to represent communal interests should be discontinued. Separate electorates should be formed, if necessary, to safeguard the interest of minorities.
- (5) The Assembly should meet twice a year and its life should be prolonged for a period of three years.
- (6) The Government should not have the power of invalidating the election of a member duly returned by a constituency, on the score of public interest.

(7) The President should not stop any member from making his representation, unless the same happened to be prolix or irrelevant.

(8) At the request of two or three members, any subject of public interest might be discussed, the members having the right of moving resolutions and asking interpellations on the same.

(9) The Dewan's Address to the Assembly should give a summary of the important subjects represented at the previous session and the action taken thereon by the Government, besides foreshadowing the policy of the Government in the succeeding year.

(10) The proof of the abstract of every member's representation should be corrected and approved by him before the same was incorporated in the official proceedings.

The Member next disapproved of the intention of the Government to abolish several of the Municipalities and substitute Panchayats in their place. The desire of the people of certain municipalities for their abolition was due to the heavy taxes levied on them without any commensurate advantage, or improvement in the general health, sanitation and comfort of its population. The Panchayat Regulation did not afford as much scope as the Municipal Regulation, for protecting the health of the people and maintaining the sanitation of towns. The Village Panchayats would serve no useful purpose, but would merely harass the people by taxes. The Member next criticised the present method of appointing Panchayat Court Judges and urged that efficiency should, on no account, be sacrificed to communal considerations. He also suggested that in the election of judges to Panchayat courts the provisions of the Regulation might be strictly adhered to.

The Member next referred to local boards. They were very useful institutions and might be entrusted with the maintenance of roads, sanitation, medical relief and primary education within their respective jurisdiction.

He next dealt with certain aspects of revenue administration, and said that, as the work of the Tahsildar was not commensurate with his high salary, that office might be abolished or the number of Tahsildars reduced, so that three or four taluks might be placed under one Tahsildar. The collection of revenue could then be entrusted to the Assistant Tahsildars. He next pleaded for the increase of pay of the Proverthy subordinates and suggested that the pay of the Proverthikars and of the *pakuthi* accountants might be fixed at Rs. 30-50, and Rs. 15-20 respectively.

President's reply.—Your valuable suggestions are noted.

175. Constitutional reforms with special reference to the reconstruction of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly on a democratic basis.

Mr. N. Madhavan Nair B. A., B. L. (Member, Trivandrum taluk) observed that the history of representative institutions in Travancore was the history of the development and progress of the State during the last thirty years. The institution of the Legislative Council and the establishment of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly bore eloquent testimony to the far-sighted statesmanship of His Highness the Malā Raja who had thereby afforded ample opportunities to his subjects for political education and training in the art of responsible government. He pointed out that Regulation II of 1097 under which the reformed Legislative Council was constituted would remain an outstanding feature of Dewan Mr. Raghaviah's administration of the State.

The Member then scrutinised some of the Sections of Regulation II of 1097 and stated that a free use of the several powers and privileges granted to the people by that Regulation was considerably checked and hampered by the exclusion of a vast array of subjects from its scope, and by the rules framed under that Regulation. He next pointed out that the members of the Council should have complete freedom of discussion on the numerous problems relating to the internal administration of the country, such as the development of ports and harbours, the extension of railways, and the improvement of the currency of the State. The Member declared that all matters that concerned the well-being of the people, excepting matters connected with the Ruling Family and the existing treaty relations with the Paramount Power, should be